TOURVILLE;

OR, THE

MYSTERIOUS LOVER.

A SENTIMENTAL NOVEL,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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TOURVILLE,

&c. &c.

THIS affecting ſcene was interrupted in a very few moments, by the appearance of a lady gaudily and fantaſtically dreſſed, who immediately approached the young Hermit, and preſented him with a lute. Tourville, inſpired by love, touched the inſtrument with a hand, that ſeemed to have been endued by the god of muſic, with a dominion over the ſounds of ſweet and impaſ-

ſioned harmony. Then with a melodious voice, he ſang the fineſt airs, from thoſe poets, who had written on love, with the warmeſt powers of conception, and the pureſt fires of imagination. The notes were infinitely diverſified, for the purpoſe of repreſenting the various turns, the revolving viciſſitudes, the brilliant hopes, the deſponding doubts of the paſſion. His auditors acknowledged with their tears the powers of the muſician, as he expreſſed the changeful fortunes of lovers; and in a ſtyle of paſtoral ſimplicity poured melodious complainings into the averted ear of obdurate, and ſcornful ſhepherdeſſes.

Such

Such was the effect, that the handſome recluſe had worked on thoſe who heard him, that they agreed by univerſal conſent, that he might ſelect from the groupe of ſhepherdeſſes around him, a nymph as beautiful, but leſs cruel and ſcornful, than the ſhepherdeſs, whoſe diſdain he had ſo feelingly lamented. The countenances of all expreſſed an ambition to obtain, what was deſtined only for one. One object alone had rivetted the eyes of Tourville; and he inſtantly threw himſelf at the feet of the Counteſs, who vainly endeavored to conceal from general obſervation, the emotions that agitated her.

The tears, that ran copiouſly from her eyes, brought to the mind of Tourville very affecting teſtimonies of the happy change, which had taken place in her boſom. He had now arrived at the ſummit of hope, and happineſs. He ſeemed to have awakened to a revived, and better exiſtence.

The heart of the Counteſs was effectually ſubdued by the intereſting ſcene, to which ſhe had been a witneſs. The character, which the young Marquis perſonated, and the diſguiſe he had aſſumed, afforded him an opportunity, of breathing his vows, and expreſſing the emotions of his love, to the woman whom he adored, and who

now appeared as the ſhepherdeſs whom he had ſelected, in conſequence of the decree, which the party had made in his favor.

The faculties of the lovers were gradually abſorbed in the pleaſures of a pure, and elevated correſpondence of ſoul, and of feeling: and the attention of the company were irreſiſtibly attracted by the delicate, though impaſſioned endearments which took place between them. But the hour of ſeparation arrived; and they were at laſt awakened from the dream of happineſs and love, into which their imaginations had been wandering. The Marquis returned with the Duke to the

Chateau of the Baron, who had invited the Princeſs, and her company, to an hunting party the next day, and to a fête, which was to ſucceed the diverſions of the field.

Tourville felt the moſt extravagant tranſports, when the plan of the next day was communicated to him. The interval of time however, which was to elapſe, before he could again behold the Counteſs, appeared an eternity. The Duke attempted to reſtrain his tranſports in vain, whilſt he was impetuouſly lamenting the delay, which time, envious of the happineſs of lovers, interpoſed to his wiſhes. As for the Counteſs Clairmont, filled with

the

the image of her lover, ſhe was too much agitated even to court repoſe, or ſlumber. She aroſe at an hour unuſually early, and walked into the garden; and abſorbed in the only contemplations, of which her mind was ſuſceptible, ſhe ſuffered her ſteps to wander without remarking it, to the extremity of a wood, which ſeparated the grounds of the Princeſs from thoſe of the Baron.

It was one of thoſe bright, and cloudleſs mornings, when all nature wears an aſpect of joy, and ſerenity; and the univerſal influence of love is diffuſed over the creation. The zephyrs wantoned with the flowers, and

the copſes were animated by the harmonious paſſion of the ſongſters, that warbled in pairs their vows of love, and of conſtancy. As it were, by a ſympathetic attraction, Tourville had wandered to the ſame ſpot; and the two lovers perceived each other at the ſame inſtant. Words would inadequately expreſs the overwhelming emotions of the Counteſs, when ſhe beheld the Marquis at her feet; when ſhe read the languiſhments of paſſion, the energies of hope, and the pleadings of love on his countenance.

Tourville obſerved with infinite delight the effect which his impaſſioned expreſſions evidently produced on the

Counteſs.

Counteſs. Then, abandoning himſelf to the tumultuous emotions of his heart; "Idol of my ſoul!" he exclaimed, "Oh vouchſafe to aſſure your lover, "that the preſumptuous confidence of "his own heart has not deceived him." Madame Clairmont heſitated for ſome moments, before ſhe could reply. At length, while a deep bluſh overſpread her countenance, "I am happy, Tour-"ville, only in the conſciouſneſs that "your paſſion is too pure, and refined, "to juſtify any alarm, or ſuſpicion on "my part—" Her voice faultered as ſhe uttered theſe words, and her frame trembled with emotion.

The Marquis now felt the genuine energy of love: and he found at this moment, what he had not known ſo thoroughly before, that the paſſion he felt, was not ſuſceptible of the reſtraint, or control either of reaſon, or prudence. A ſigh eſcaped him: and his agitation was not unperceived by the Counteſs. "Ah! Tourville," ſhe continued, "never, never ſhould I "have yielded up my ſoul to the emo-"tions I have betrayed, never ſhould "I have relaxed in my ſtruggle againſt "it, had I not learned the ſtory of the "misfortune, which has befallen you. "But that accident has cemented the "union of our ſouls. It rivets our in-"tercourſe by the pure and ſacred ce-

"ment

" ment of an alliance, which is lifted
" above every thing ſordid, or ſenſual.
" It has permitted me to make a con-
" feſſion, which, under other circum-
" ſtances, I never could utter. You
" have obtained an empire over my
" heart. But it is the empire of a re-
" fined, elevated friendſhip; not the
" tyranny of a fierce, and overbearing
" paſſion. Oh Tourville, if you are
" animated by theſe ſentiments, what
" treaſures of eternal, and unſullied
" happineſs have you not diſcovered?"

Theſe words were pregnant with a myſtery which the Marquis did not underſtand. The avowal, however, which the Counteſs made in his favor, in-

ſpired him with a delight, that approached to extaſy; and ſeizing her hand, he could not forbear carrying it to his lips, and imprinting a kiſs of ardor and gratitude upon it. The ſenſations of the Counteſs were ſo violent, that ſhe vainly endeavored to ſummon all her fortitude, to conceal the tranſports, her lover had inſpired. "Yes, "deareſt Tourville," ſhe exclaimed, "you ſhall ſtill be happy; bleſt with "a love as pure, and as exalted as "mine, even an Abelard might be "happy." Tourville was aſtoniſhed, and perplexed at this myſterious declaration. The alluſion to the name of Abelard overwhelmed him with confuſion and aſtoniſhment. He was preparing

paring to requeſt an explanation of the equivocal language, in which the Counteſs had addreſſed him, when the noiſe of voices calling out the name of the Counteſs, interrupted him. It would have been imprudent to have remained any longer together. The Marquis, therefore, bade adieu to his miſtreſs; at the ſame time vowing that his heart would never feel repoſe, till they met again, and lamenting that he did not underſtand the compariſon, which ſhe had uſed, which was equally painful, and diſgraceful, he tore himſelf from her preſence, and darted into a thicket, which concealed him. As for the Counteſs, ſhe did not hear his laſt words; ſo abſorbed was ſhe by the

pain

pain of ſeparation, from all that her heart held dear.

When Tourville was alone, he was agitated by a conflict of vehement emotions. Alternately animated with hope, and depreſſed by fear, he was in a ſtate of ſuſpence, between the joy, with which the avowal of the Counteſs had inſpired him, and the chagrin he felt, at the unaccountable compariſon ſhe had made. On this latter topic, her diſcourſe ſeemed wholly unintelligible. He recollected alſo the injunction given him by the Duke, not to undeceive her as to any error, in which ſhe might ſeem to be involved. All theſe circumſtances

cumſtances raiſed in his mind a feeling of inexpreſſible anxiety.

Such were the reflections of Tourville, when the Duke ſuddenly approached him. The Marquis took no notice of his friend, till the latter ſaluted him with ſome pleaſantry on the ſolemnity, which ſat on his countenance. In reply, the unhappy Tourville explained to the Duke the cauſes of his uneaſineſs; and earneſtly entreated the Duke to give him an ample explanation on the ſubject, on which he had ſo imperfectly and partially explained himſelf. While he was making this requeſt, ſuddenly ſtarting, as it were with affright;

"Alas!"

" Alas!" ſaid he, " perhaps the very
" explanation I am requiring of you,
" may prove the very means of de-
" ſtroying our happineſs, and of over-
" turning the fabric which love and
" hope have erected. Yes, I have
" beheld the idol of my ſoul. I have
" converſed with her on the very ſub-
" ject of my paſſion. I have heard her
" acknowledge the feelings, with which
" I have ſo long hoped to inſpire her.
" Her eyes, her tears, bore their teſti-
" mony to the ſincerity of that acknow-
" ledgment. But above all, her myſ-
" terious ſilence, which love, and love
" only could interpret. That ſilence I
" importuned her to break—Alas! too
" ſucceſsfully

" ſucceſsfully for my own tranquil-
" lity—"

" How!" interrupted the Duke,
" has ſhe doomed you then to deſ-
" pair?"

" Oh no, ſhe has confirmed my moſt
" ſanguine hopes."

" And yet you deſpond! my moſt
" paradoxical of lovers."

" Alas! ſhe is deceived, moſt groſsly
" deceived. She expects only a con-
" ſtrained, an imperfect paſſion from
" her lover. She thinks me exempt
" from the tranſports, the raptures of
" deſire.

" deſire. On this condition only ſhe " ſeems to love me. For of ſo myſte- " rious, and unaccountable a nature is " the miſtake ſhe has conceived, that " in expreſs terms ſhe compared me to " the ill-fated Abelard!"

" A moſt ridiculous circumſtance " truly. Why ſhould you alarm your- " ſelf, when you have received from " the very lips of the Counteſs, a de- " claration that ſhe loves you." The Duke, who enjoyed a degree of mali- cious pleaſure at the aukward embar- raſſment of the lovers, ſcarcely re- frained from laughter, as he uttered theſe words.

" Why

" Why, Duke, you ſeem ſcarcely ſur-
" priſed at the miracle I am telling
you," exclaimed Tourville.

" I am never to be ſurpriſed, when
" the miracle is performed by a wo-
" man," returned the Duke, coolly.
" Nay I ſometimes find it neceſſary to
" deceive them for their own in-
" tereſts."

" For God's ſake," interrupted the
Marquis, " relieve me from the horri-
" ble ſuſpenſe, under which I am la-
" bouring. Do not aggravate my ſuf-
" ferings, by forbearing all the com-
" munications, which may elucidate
" the dreadful myſtery of the Coun-
" teſs's

" teſs's words, and remove from my " breaſt, the burden of anxiety, that " oppreſſes it."

The Duke began at length to be convinced, that the preſent was a proper opportunity for the explanation of the myſtery. But the difficulty that embarraſſed him, was that of perſuading the Marquis that the plan was deviſed for the ſucceſs of his amour with the Counteſs. It was neceſſary, however, that the circumſtance ſhould be explained.

Tourville ſtarted with horror at the imputation, which he learned, the Duke had thrown upon him; and his anger

anger increaſed in proportion as the ſecret was unravelled. In vain did the Duke remonſtrate with Tourville. In vain did he labor to convince him, that the miſtake into which the Counteſs had been ſo artfully enſnared, had already laid the foundation of his happineſs. In vain did he tell him, that the revocation of her vow, and the tender confeſſion of her paſſion, were the happy effects of the deception. Deaf to perſuaſion, and irritated with the plot, which had ſullied his character with ſo diſhonorable an imputation, he denounced in the ſevereſt language the perfidy of the ſtratagem; and into ſuch extravagant exceſſes did his anger betray him, that he would have exhibited

a truly

a truly ridiculous ſpectacle, had not his countenance been impreſſed at the ſame time with the marks of the moſt bitter and poignant emotions.

" Yes, Duke," ſaid he, " I am then " indebted to you for a report, which " has made me the ſubject of conver- " ſation all over Paris. Diſgraceful " as the reproach is, it would not give " me any uneaſineſs, had not the odi- " ous idea been infuſed into the breaſt " of Madame de Clairmont. Moſt " horrible ſuſpicion! And am I to be " loved with the ſenſibilities of pity, " inſtead of the raptures of love? To " be loved without alarm—the thought " is diſtraction!—"

The

The Duke liſtened to theſe exclamations with his characteriſtic coolneſs.

"Aſſuredly," continued Tourville, "the ſort of compaſſion, with which "I have inſpired the Counteſs, is the "completeſt ſatire on my character as "a man."

"My dear Marquis," replied Nou- "ville, be a little patient. Let me "entreat you to permit the Counteſs, "whoſe foible is that of an over- "ſtrained and ſentimental delicacy, to "remain a little longer in this ſalutary "error. Depend upon it, if ſhe is "woman, ſhe will ſoon wiſh to be un-

"deceived.

" deceived. On theſe conditions only,
" will I enſure your ſucceſs: a ſucceſs,
" the more delightful, as there is ſo
" much novelty and originality in the
" ſcheme, that led to it.

The unhappy Marquis did not concur with his friend in applauding the novelty of the ſtratagem. " How is it " poſſible," cried he, " that I can " ever inſpire any other feeling, than " that of contempt. No, I would ra- " ther renounce her altogether, than " impoſe upon the woman, whom I " love. Yes, I am reſolved to unfold " the whole myſtery to the Counteſs."

The Duke was ſomewhat alarmed at the

the reſolution, intimated by the Marquis. "And would you," ſaid he with conſiderable earneſtneſs, "would "you at one blow deſtroy the fabric "of your own happineſs, we have "raiſed with ſo much care and diffi-"culty? Can you be ſo inſenſible a "lover, as to forego the fulfilment of "the ſweet and enchanting hopes, her "declaration has already infuſed into "your boſom? But I have done. "Haſten then to deſtroy yourſelf at "the feet of your miſtreſs. The in-"terpretation you have put on my "zeal for your ſucceſs, will not per-"mit me to compaſſionate you for the "future."

The Marquis was confounded with grief at the diſcourſe of his friend. "What is it," ſaid he, "that you "would require of me? What is it, "that love, and friendſhip exact?"

"The courage to be happy, my dear "Marquis," returned the Duke, with conſiderable emotion.

Tourville ſtill remained in a ſtate of perplexity. "Alas!" he exclaimed, "the heart of the nobleſt of her ſex is "deceived by her imagination. Love "diſdains ſo unmeaning a phraſeology. "The heart, that vibrates with the ge- "nuine throbbings of love, could not "conceive ſo cold, ſo barren an idea of its

" its enjoyments. Love conducts us
" into a region of bright and glowing
" enchantment; where the ſoul is in-
" toxicated by delicious draughts at the
" fountain of bliſs—But this new-fa-
" ſhioned love which the Counteſs
" ſpeaks of—I confeſs I cannot com-
" prehend it—

" Nor I," interrupted the Duke.
" Though I confeſs your mode of
" loving is rather too full of buſtle
" and agitation for the ſobriety of my
" feelings. Even the torments of love,
" they ſay, are exquiſite; ſo that your
" preſent inquietude will only ſweeten
" the enjoyment, which the Counteſs
" has promiſed you. Beſides, what
" lover has ever ſhrunk from a tempo-

" rary inquietude, if he has felt the
" warmth of a paſſion, like that you
" have deſcribed with ſo much energy?
" Your happineſs, Marquis, depends
" on yourſelf. Women are governed
" by a hoſt of little caprices, which
" muſt be won by ſtratagem and arti-
" fice. I conjure you, therefore, to
" let the Counteſs retain the miſtake
" into which ſhe has been led. Love
" will do the reſt."

The Marquis gradually ſubmitted to the expoſtulations of his friend; who continued for ſeveral hours to confirm a reſolution, which the heart of Tourville ſeemed ſo ſtrongly to diſavow. In the mean while the preparations, which were made by the Baron for the

the reception of the Counteſs de Clairmont, whom he expected with the Princeſs, and the numerous party who were at her villa, diverted his attention from the contemplations which he had been indulging; and he learned by experience, that true lovers, in the very boſom of grief and anxiety, may ſometimes be ſoothed by the moſt agreeable of reflections.

The Counteſs appeared in the habit of an Amazon, and the character, ſhe aſſumed, had imparted a freſh portion of fire to her countenance. A train of females attended her, dreſſed in the ſame faſhion, but not adorned with the ſame charms. Her eyes wandered

about in different directions, till they were bleſt with the ſight of Tourville. They advanced to each other; and the affections of their ſouls were almoſt indulged to ſatiety, by the reciprocal interchange of paſſionate glances, which paſſed from face to face with inexpreſſible rapidity.

No care had been omitted, to render the amuſements of the day as intereſting, and as ſplendid, as poſſible. During the hunt, the Marquis did not once quit the preſence of Madame Clairmont. Their intercourſe was undiſturbed; and he had an ample opportunity to urge his ſuit in words adapted to the force of his love, and in thoſe phraſes,

phraſes, which are ſacred to the paſſion that ſuggeſts them.

Towards the cloſe of the day, the muſic of a moſt enchanting concert delighted the ſenſes of the company. Then a groupe of wood-nymphs danced to their ruſtic roundelays, and ſung the livelieſt airs, in praiſe of the accompliſhed Counteſs. The party had now arrived at the caſtle of the Baron, where the moſt elegant preparations had been made for their entertainment. In the mean time, the females retired to a ſhort repoſe, after the fatigues of the chaſe, as well as to change the Amazonian dreſs, in which they had been

habited during their morning's diverſion.

A ſerene, and delightful evening invited them to the garden; and the company could not reſiſt the luxury of enjoying the cool and refreſhing gales that flew along the walks.

The Counteſs Clairmont was ſitting in one of the arbors, when the ſcheme of a general walk in the garden was propoſed to her. She excuſed herſelf, by pleading the fatigues of the exerciſe ſhe had undergone; and the Duke, the Baron, and Tourville, remained with her. The two friends of the Marquis, however,

however, did not overlook the opportunity, which ſeemed ſo propitious to the lovers; and, on ſome ſlight pretext, left them together in the bower.

The eyes of Madame Clairmont did not diſſemble, for a moment, the joy, which illuminated them, nor the cauſe, whence the emotion proceeded; while Tourville, equally tranſported, threw himſelf at the feet of his miſtreſs. But there was evidently a ſecret pang in his boſom, that checked the riſing emotions of his heart. "Alas!" he ſaid to himſelf, "is not the affection of the "Counteſs the mere effect of a diſho-"norable artifice, and a moſt deteſtable "error!" His agitation was too vi-

ſible to eſcape the obſervation of the Counteſs.

" Cruel Tourville," ſhe exclaimed, " if my love cannot make you happy, " if the expreſſion of that love——"

" Yes, I am happy!" replied the Marquis, with conſiderable emotion. " But tell me, I conjure you, tell me, " would you not always have remained " inexorable, if——"

" Dear Tourville!" interrupted the Counteſs, " the rights of misfortune " are ſacred in my eyes. You ſee how " I have learned to reſpect them. Then, " hear me, while I lay before you the " whole

" whole hiſtory of my heart; and
" pardon, in pity pardon its weak-
" neſs and its wanderings. Till I
" loved you, and till I found that
" Fate had woven our deſtinies toge-
" ther, I languiſhed in a ſtate of ſad,
" and melancholy indifference. My
" days crept ſlowly on, in a dull and
" monotonous ſucceſſion; and my life
" glided away without agitation, or
" emotion. Still, however, my ima-
" gination was ſometimes diſturbed by
" its own offspring; and I felt a ſort
" of myſterious and indefinite affection
" for an unknown object, on which
" the creative efforts of fancy had la-
" viſhed her moſt ſeductive embel-
" liſhments. I experienced every day

 " the

"the throbbings of this undirected,
"but reſtleſs paſſion; till I ſaw you,
"my Tourville. Then my imagina-
"tion repoſed in the contemplation of
"your virtues; my fictitious idol was
"annihilated, and you uſurped its
"ſhrine."

The Marquis at theſe words fell on his knees, and claſped her to his breaſt. Such was the tranſport, with which the expreſſions of the Counteſs had inſpired him. Madame de Clairmont was pleaſed at the effect ſhe had produced on her lover; and thus proceeded.

"The empire you had eſtabliſhed over
"my

" my heart, and its affections, I knew
" already, to be out of the power of
" Fate itſelf: and if I apparently re-
" ſiſted it awhile, it was owing to the
" dread I felt, that you were capable of
" forſaking me. I had conceived an
" abhorrence of marriage. My own
" reflections, the examples I have had
" before my eyes, and the miſery of my
" firſt connection had taught me that
" it raviſhes from women the only va-
" luable treaſure they poſſeſs; while
" it looſens the ſtrongeſt hold we have
" over the hearts of men. Till a wo-
" man grants the laſt, every endear-
" ment is a favor; beyond that, it
" becomes a debt that ſhe owes."

The

The oaths and proteſtations of the Marquis would have diſcovered the whole myſtery, had not the Counteſs, who, by this time, began to be apprehenſive of interruption, exacted from him a ſilent attention, while ſhe continued.

"Fearful," ſhe proceeded, "leſt I "ſhould oppreſs, by too much rigor, "your heart, and my own affections, I "have not abſtained from the enjoy- "ment of frequent intercourſes with "you. But the enjoyment is, thank "Heaven! wholly guiltleſs. It is this "enchanting communion of two ſouls, "that conſtitutes the pureſt of all "earthly raptures. Deſtroy the in-

nocence,

" nocence, and you annihilate the en-
" joyment of the intercourſe. In the
" mean time, my uncle ſeconded your
" addreſſes to me. My reſiſtance was
" the effect of much ſtruggle, and much
" anguiſh, in my breaſt. My only re-
" ſource, was that of avoiding you.
" The imprudence you committed, as
" it was without excuſe, left me with-
" out conſolation. I reſolved to aban-
" don you, and my mind was a ſcene
" of deſolation, when I ſeemed to have
" exiled from it the only image that
" brightened it. Ah, Tourville! ſhall
" I proceed? Shall I recall to your re-
" flections——"

The Marquis, though he burned with impatience

impatience to interrupt her, with conſiderable violence to his own emotions, ſuffered her to continue.

"With the deſign of ſupplanting "you in my affections, your ſecret "cauſe of ſorrow, and the fatal myſtery "of your ſufferings, were all revealed "to me."

"You have been deceived!" exclaimed the Marquis impatiently.

"Alas!" replied the Counteſs, "the "recollection of your calamity ſtill "preys on your repoſe. I envy your "Venetian miſtreſs the affections you "once beſtowed on her——"

Here

Here the Marquis could not contain his emotions. "Never, never," ſaid he, "did I love any other than the "adorable woman whom I now be-"hold before me! Never ſhall I adore "any other!"

"Ah, Tourville!" replied the Counteſs, ſignificantly, "I believe your laſt "proteſtation."

As for the Marquis, though he was almoſt in deſpair, he could ſcarcely refrain from ſmiling at the obſervation of Madame Clairmont. "Believe me," he exclaimed, "that, cheering as theſe "expreſſions of your regard are to my "ſoul, I ſhould be the moſt wretched

"of

" of men, unleſs you ceaſed to be inex-
" orable——"

" I have unfolded to you my whole
" heart," replied Madame de Clair-
mont. " You know the ſentiments
" I have cheriſhed; and you ought to
" know alſo, that I never would have
" made the acknowledgments, you
" have juſt heard, had not your ſuf-
" ferings removed the apprehenſion of
" my ever being betrayed into thoſe
" errors, in which our affections ſo
" often involve us. Ah, Tourville!
" and is it not conſolation for ſuch ſuf-
" ferings, that they have endeared you
" to a heart——" The vehemence of
her feelings ſtifled her utterance, and
ſhe

ſhe embraced the Marquis with the moſt impaſſioned tenderneſs. Tourville would have probably preſumed upon the ordinary licence of a lover, and given way to the dominion of his emotions, had not the Duke and the Baron informed him, by ſigns, that the company were returning from their walk. Almoſt in the ſame inſtant, they were ſurrounded by a numerous circle; but lovers ſoon learn the delightful myſtery of being alone in the very boſom of ſociety.

The Marquis, and his friend, whoſe manners had conſiderably prepoſſeſſed the Princeſs in their favor, received the moſt flattering requeſt to repeat their

their viſit at the chateau. The invitation was received with the warmeſt acknowledgments.

As for Madame de Clairmont, never was ſhe ſo exquiſitely delighted with the virtues of her friend, the Princeſs, as when ſhe remarked the kindneſs of her attentions to the amiable Tourville. Nor was the Princeſs unacquainted with the attachment of Tourville to the Counteſs. Their paſſion, though it was cautiouſly veiled from general remark, was perfectly undiſguiſed to the penetration of that lady, who had ſeen too much of human nature, and its paſſions, not to put a ready interpretation on the conduct of the

the lovers towards each other. But though ſhe had made the diſcovery, as ſhe had received no confidential communication from her friend, ſhe could not interpoſe her advice, nor deliver her ſentiments upon the ſubject; and though ſhe felt an eager ſolicitude to promote the wiſhes of the lovers, ſhe waited, therefore, for a communication from the Counteſs, that ſhe might not offend her feelings by an indelicate anticipation.

The Counteſs, whoſe temper was far from being reſerved, was ſtrongly deſirous of unburdening her boſom on the ſubject. But there was ſomething ſo ſacred in the declaration ſhe had made

made to the Marquis, that ſhe could not prevail on herſelf to utter a ſyllable concerning it. In truth, never was woman in a ſtate of mind more truly embarraſſing, and critical. She feared that, when ſhe communicated her feelings, they would be unintelligible, becauſe they were of ſo ſingular and extraordinary a texture. Her imagination had beguiled her into a dream, from which ſhe was fearful of being awakened; and ſhe felt all the agitations of the viſion, while ſhe was afraid to diſſolve its enchantment. In this ſtate, the mind is not diſpoſed to reveal its own ſecrets.

But the tranſports ſhe felt infinitely coun-

terbalanced theſe perplexities. And where is the woman, who when, for the firſt time, ſhe has pronounced the ſacred words, "I love," has not experienced a ſimilar emotion; a mixed emotion, made up of hope and of fear; of rapture and alarm. Such was the ſituation of the Counteſs. But that which was moſt ſingular, and which ſhe moſt feared to reveal, was, that her paſſion ſhould increaſe, on the very account of the misfortune her lover had undergone; a circumſtance, by which the love of ordinary ſouls, would be converted into contempt and loathing.

When the Counteſs was alone, ſhe exclaimed,

exclaimed, with the extacy of the moſt impaſſioned feeling, " Yes, I have ob-
" tained an invaluable treaſure! I
" have ſecured the affections of a lover,
" who unites, with the warmth of an
" idolatrous paſſion, the exquiſite deli-
" cacy of the pureſt ſentiment. My
" love increaſes, in proportion to the
" confidence I have repoſed in him.
" Oh, god of love! may Tourville
" never harbour a wiſh, of which the
" accompliſhment would pollute the
" hallowed and ſacred tenderneſs, with
" which he has inſpired me! And what
" is it that I deſire, but the communion
" of our ſouls, the wedlock of mutual
" ſympathies! The height of all my
" bliſs, is the delight of breathing the
" ſame

" ſame air with Tourville, of anſwer-
" ing his ſighs with mine own, and of
" peruſing in his countenance the de-
" lightful confeſſions of his love."

The Duke and the Marquis availed themſelves of the polite importunities of the Princeſs, who were ſcarcely ever abſent from the chateau. The charms of the Counteſs Clairmont attracted a crowd of admirers; and the happineſs of the Marquis, whom ſhe diſtinguiſhed by ſuch peculiar attentions, was the object of general envy. The Counteſs inſpired every party, that met at the villa, with animation, and vivacity. Every fête which the Princeſs gave, was embelliſhed by the

wit, the good-humour, and the beauty, of this amiable woman.

I have before remarked, that the mind of the Counteſs was conſiderably tinctured with ſentiments, that were derived from a world of romance and imagination. She was fond, from her infancy, of ancient chivalry, and ſhe had read a conſiderable number of tales, the principal incidents of which ſpring out of that martial, and gallant ſpirit, that ſoftened, while it embelliſhed the manners. The Marquis, whoſe only happineſs was that of anticipating the wiſhes of his miſtreſs, deviſed a ſort of amuſement, in reſemblance of the ancient cuſtom of

of chivalry. The party were ſufficiently numerous to make a complete tournament; and it was contrived, that the ladies ſhould give the palm to the victorious knight. The ſuperior activity and grace which Tourville diſplayed in theſe manly exerciſes, the images of war without its ferocity, entitled him to the firſt prize. And with what rapture did he receive it, while he beheld the lovely arms of the Counteſs extended to beſtow it!

While the lovers were taſting theſe ſweet endearments, and each of them panting for that conſummation of their love, which the one was fearful of permitting, and the other re-

ſtrained from aſking, the Duke, to whoſe very exiſtence ſome new ſpecies of amuſement was abſolutely neceſſary, without abandoning the intereſt of his friend, was purſuing an occupation of a very different nature.

In the party was a whimſical gentleman, rather advanced in years. He had been fooliſh enough to doat upon the charms of a young woman, whom he had lately eſpouſed; and he was unreaſonable enough alſo to imagine, that thoſe charms were deſtined for his own excluſive enjoyment. Nouville thought that he had lighted upon an adventure, which promiſed him infinite

finite amuſement; and he immediately framed the project of alarming the jealouſy of the huſband, by means of the vanities of his wife. A good perſon, ſuperior addreſs, and an intereſting habit of converſation, enſured him ſucceſs in his ſcheme. The good old gentleman had conceived a conſiderable degree of averſion againſt him, which he could ſcarcely refrain from expreſſing, whenever the Duke ſhewed the ſlighteſt attentions to his lady. Flora was young, pretty, and voluptuous; and ſhe had an air of ſimplicity, that rendered her extremely intereſting.

She had not been married very long,

and her huſband had already tormented her to death with his doating, and his jealouſy. She had been driven into the connection, by the temptation of a ſplendid eſtabliſhment; and, like many other women, refuſed to appeal to her heart, when her vanity only was conſulted. She could not love him; nay, the duties to which ſhe was obliged to ſubmit, had ſoon taught her to hate him. From morning to evening he was perſecuting her with reproaches, and doubts of her fidelity. He was agitated during the night by dreams that repreſented her in the arms of a more vigorous, and favoured paramour; and he never failed, as he ſtarted from his ſlumbers,

to

to acquaint Flora with the cauſe of his perturbations. She dreamed alſo in her turn; but they were better and more delightful viſions, than thoſe which viſited the eyelids of her lord. Since ſhe had been at the villa, the attentions of the Duke had agitated a boſom, which was not naturally devoid of female ſenſibilities; and in theſe nocturnal wanderings of her imagination, ſhe ſeemed to claſp, in ideal unſubſtantial extaſy, the manly form of Nouville, inſtead of the withered and marrowleſs ſkeleton that lay beſide her.

At the compliments which the Duke addreſſed to her beauty, ſhe at firſt

bluſhed, and hung down her head. After a little repetition, they became palatable; and in a little time ſhe replied to them with an engaging and expreſſive ſimper. From being at firſt only agreeable, Nouville proceeded to be tender.

Her huſband was not unobſervant of that which it were always happier for a huſband to be unconſcious of. It was with great difficulty that he could perſuade himſelf not to make a public expoſure of his ſuſpicions. But his vanity was won over to the ſide of the Duke, by the attention which the latter maliciouſly paid him. Often did he reſolve to go immediately to Paris,

Paris, with his wife; and to ſnatch her from the ruin which ſeemed to hang over her, and of which, in the true ſpirit of a woman, ſhe had not ſo complete an abhorrence as he deſired. But he was reſtrained from the ſtep, by a fear of affronting the hoſpitable owner of the villa, as well as of holding up his own apprehenſions to the ridicule of the party.

It was rather a difficult dilemma. But the good huſband imagined that he had found the only expedient that was the ſafe one. This was no other than that of putting Flora under the cuſtody of his own ſiſter, who had arrived at that ſober period of virginity,

in which the dangerous deſires of woman are quite aſleep, from never having been called into uſe, and activity. Her temper, it is true, was not very inviting; and ſhe ſeemed diſpoſed to revenge the deſolations which time had made on her charms, by all the ill-natured perſecutions, which the ingenuity of her malice could invent.

She was one of thoſe beings, who, while they allow themſelves the utmoſt licence of conduct and of manners, are diſpoſed to preſcribe a ſtrict and inexorable rule of behaviour to others. In one word, ſo little inclined was ſhe to pity the weakneſs of her

her ſex, that ſhe did not even forgive the errors that flowed from a pure and virtuous ſenſibility.

Nothing could gratify the vanity of this woman ſo much, as having a ſort of guardianſhip over her pretty ſiſter-in-law. Her boſom naturally cheriſhed an hoſtility to beauty, and the attractions of youth. The huſband began to grow more eaſy, when he obſerved the vigilance of the duenna; and the latter aſſumed gradually a ſeverer ſpirit of animadverſion and control over her relation. She purſued her in all her walks, was at her elbow when ſhe danced, and overlooked her at the card table. She

directed her conduct by long and tedious admonitions; threw out insinuations against every one who paid her the slightest attentions, and endeavoured to alarm the unsuspecting innocence of her mind, by exaggerated pictures of treacherous lovers, and abandoned women. But every lecture closed with a solemn injunction to avoid the addresses of the Duke.

To the voluptuous Flora this command appeared a very cruel one; and she suspected that a compliance with it would not be very easy, in the present state of her affections. All that she could do was to preserve, in the com-

company of her admirer, an air of conſtraint, and of coldneſs. But the Duke eaſily perceived that this was by no means an air of real indifference.

The Duke ſoon diſcovered the ſuſpicious watchfulneſs with which he was obſerved, and he determined to elude the vigilance of Flora's guardian. The only expedient that ſeemed likely to facilitate the project, was that of paying aſſiduities to the good lady herſelf. He feigned, therefore, a vehement paſſion for her; admired the beauties of a countenance, which inſpired every one with averſion, and praiſed the luſtre of a pair of eyes, that

that beamed with nothing but envy, and ill-humour.

She had, however, been by no means unobſervant of the Duke's attentions to Flora; and when, in purſuance of his ſtratagem, he urged his paſſion for her with the ardor of a vehement lover, ſhe deſired him to explain this apparent inconſiſtency in his conduct. Theſe were difficulties which Nouville knew how to remove. He proteſted to her, that his gallantries to Flora had been merely fictitious and aſſumed, that he might conceal from general obſervation the real and genuine ſentiment which he had entertained for her.

The

The Duke was now rather violent in his advances, and his *inamorata* began to be alarmed. She was fearful of breaking, by one imprudent ſtep, through an artificial texture of prudence, and chaſtity, which ſhe had worn for more than thirty years. The ſtruggle now lay betwixt the vanity of having made, for the firſt time, a conqueſt over man, and the dread of loſing her reputation.

The only mode by which ſhe thought the adventure might be conducted, without endangering either her virginity, or her character, was that of recommending the Duke to redouble his attentions to Flora. The Duke had

had previouſly informed the latter of his project; and ſhe was very well contented that he ſhould aſſume the appearance of inconſtancy, ſince the plan promiſed ſucceſs to the wiſhes, with which the intrigue and addreſs of her admirer had inſpired her.

This double intrigue afforded the Duke infinite diverſion. Each of the females followed the impulſes of their hearts, and the beautiful Flora obtained the gratification of her wiſhes, without awakening the jealouſy of her huſband.

The Marquis, to whom the Duke had communicated this whimſical circumſtance,

cumſtance, felt but little intereſt in his amour. His own mind was the theatre of contending emotions. Often did he exclaim, "Oh, moſt perverſe "fate! I am loved by the object which "my ſoul prizes above every thing "that the world contains, but the "conſummation of my love is cruelly "forbidden. Alas! if the Counteſs "were at length to ſmile conſent, and "admit to the rank of the gods her "fond and admiring lover——My very "ſenſes are overwhelmed at the mere "contemplation of ſuch happineſs. "But, alas! the abſurd notion ſhe has "imbibed, has rendered the accom-"pliſhment of ſuch wiſhes for ever "impoſſible!"

"My

"My dear Marquis," interrupted Nouville, "you are eternally deſpond-
"ing. For my part, I never could
"endure ſuch vehement tranſitions
"from the height of hope to the
"loweſt gulph of deſpair, as thoſe
"which you ſeem to undergo."

"It is the conſtitution of your
"mind," replied Tourville, "that
"renders you ſo cold and indifferent
"on this ſubject. The ſort of love
"which inhabits my heart, is of a
"more ardent, enthuſiaſtic com-
"plexion. But I have reſolved—I
"will no longer withhold the diſco-
"very—I will haſten to diſſipate a
"deluſion ſo hoſtile to my peace—

"I am

" I am more and more intoxicated
" with her perfections—and to feed
" one's imagination with imperfect vi-
" ſions of the happineſs which ſuch a
" woman is capable of beſtowing, is
" the moſt terrible of all tortures.—
" Yes, ſhe is all-perfect. Suffer me to
" be even prolix in the enumeration
" of her charms. On ſuch a theme,
" love is naturally garrulous. Nay,
" the cruelty with which ſhe reſiſts
" my addreſſes, is a proof of the ele-
" vation of her mind."

In this ſtate of things the General arrived. The Duke and Tourville were delighted to ſee him, but the Counteſs

Counteſs was almoſt tranſported with joy. The good old man teſtified, by his manner, how much he rejoiced to meet Tourville, and the Counteſs. The former, in the overflowing of his heart, was impatient to communicate all that happened during the abſence of his friend; and he was almoſt in the very act of pouring out to him the concerns of his heart, on the intereſting ſubject of his amour, when the General interrupted him.

" Apropos, Marquis!" ſaid he, " I " have a piece of intelligence for you, " which muſt be peculiarly intereſting " to you. The Baroneſs"——

" What

" What of the Baroneſs?" exclaimed Tourville.

" What do you think? She has " taken your reputation wholly into " her own keeping. It is in very ſafe " hands, moſt unqueſtionably. She is " a moſt admirable guardian of cha- " racters.—But I will not trifle with " you. This abſurd and odious crea- " ture has been amuſing herſelf, my " dear Marquis, in circulating the " moſt ſingular report concerning you, " that could ever enter into the heart " of woman. I have moſt anxiouſly " counteracted her malice, as far as I " have been able; and I have ſuc- " ceeded in convincing many, who

" have

" have heard it, of the falſehood and " impoſture of the calumny. But it " has penetrated to the ears of ſome, " whom their natures and diſpoſitions " have rendered credulous on ſubjects " of this nature; and theſe are the " majority of thoſe amongſt whom " the Baroneſs diſperſes her poiſon."

At this moment the Counteſs Clairmont interrupted the relation, which the General was making to Tourville. After the ſalutations had been exchanged betwixt the Counteſs, and the good old man, the latter was preparing to proceed in his narrative. The Duke, however, obſerved him, and by ſome ſigns, which he ſignifi-

cantly

cantly made to him, and which the General obeyed, though he did not underſtand their intimation, diſſuaded him from perſiſting.

When the Counteſs withdrew, the Duke and Tourville explained themſelves unequivocally on this extraordinary ſubject. The General, when he became acquainted with the myſterious plot they had been framing, burſt out into the moſt vehement ejaculations of aſtoniſhment. "Good "heavens," he exclaimed, "what a "difference is there betwixt the wo-"men of my time, and your modern "race of females! Why, what a pa-"radox is it, to lay a plot for en-

"ſnaring the affections of a woman,
"by giving her to underſtand that
"her lover is diſabled from returning
"them!"

When, however, they informed him of the ſingular ſucceſs with which the ſtratagem had been attended, from the manner in which it had ſo viſibly operated on the heart of the Counteſs, he expreſſed conſiderable ſatisfaction.

The Marquis obſerved it, and exclaimed, "Are you then in league
"with Nouville? Do you accede to
"this moſt ſtrange and unaccountable
"ſcheme? Why ſhould I ſuſtain the
"yoke

"yoke of this tormenting diſſimula-
"tion, when my heart ſpeaks a lan-
"guage of pure and unequivocal ſin-
"cerity?"

In ſpite of the reaſonings and pro-teſtations of Tourville, the General manifeſted himſelf a warm convert to the project. He aſſured him of its ultimate ſucceſs, and earneſtly united his exhortations with thoſe of the Duke, patiently to await the event of it. But if the arguments of his friends had but little weight with the Mar-quis, the impreſſion, which his recent interview with his miſtreſs had left on his mind, contributed in no ſlight de-gree to corroborate their reaſonings.

He called to his aid the recollection of thoſe delightful reciprocations of love, that had, as it were, vibrated from the heart of one to that of the other; her ſentiments of eternal and unfading conſtancy, which ſhe conveyed in the moſt chaſte but glowing expreſſions. He recollected theſe things, and he was unwilling to awake the woman whom he adored, from the enchantments which her imagination had ſo buſily ſtrewed around her; and he gradually collected reſolution enough to continue the voluntary ſuffering, he had already ſuſtained with heroic fortitude.

The Counteſs, who was endued with a very

a very refined and poliſhed taſte, for every ſpecies of elegant amuſement, was extremely fond of the repreſentation of plays. No ſooner had ſhe intimated her fondneſs for this ſort of entertainment, than orders were inſtantly given by the hoſpitable Princeſs for the neceſſary preparations. A beautiful theatre was in a ſhort time fitted up, and ſeveral exquiſite comedies performed by the company. As for Tourville, whether he was in reality inſpired with more than ordinary powers, by an anxiety to contribute to the happineſs of his miſtreſs, or whether he was endued with the genuine talents of a good actor, certain it is, that the ſpirit, and energy,

with which he repreſented the characters allotted to him, almoſt enraptured the woman who loved him. When he was pourtraying the emotions of a lover, the real and unaffected aſpirations of nature ſeemed to burſt from his boſom, and he was no longer the actor. Beſides, he uttered the thoughts of the poet in a tone the more captivating, becauſe it was unartificial; and in the flow of a feeling elocution, he ſhewed an undeniable ſuperiority over the tame and unanimated declamation of the Pariſian actors.

One evening, before the commencement of one of theſe performances, a noiſe

noiſe was heard in the court-yard, which announced the arrival of a grand retinue, with ſome unexpected viſitors. Amongſt theſe entered the Baroneſs. Her appearance excited, amongſt the whole of this cheerful circle, a general murmur of diſſatisfaction.

But what could have brought her from Paris? A trivial adventure had occurred to interrupt the repoſe of this amiable lady, and ſhe was driven into the country, as a temporary refuge from her chagrin. It was nothing more than this. Two of her lovers, on whom ſhe had beſtowed the moſt unequivocal marks of encouragement, had, by an unfortunate acci-

with which he repreſented the characters allotted to him, almoſt enraptured the woman who loved him. When he was pourtraying the emotions of a lover, the real and unaffected aſpirations of nature ſeemed to burſt from his boſom, and he was no longer the actor. Beſides, he uttered the thoughts of the poet in a tone the more captivating, becauſe it was unartificial; and in the flow of a feeling elocution, he ſhewed an undeniable ſuperiority over the tame and unanimated declamation of the Pariſian actors.

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dent, diſcovered that a third had received ſimilar proofs of favour from the bounty of the Baroneſs, and was in fact more loved than either of them. The admirer who felt the indignity with the moſt ſenſibility, was deſerving of a better and more ingenuous treatment. He was young, and had been gradually allured, by the artifices of this voluptuous woman, into a more than ordinary degree of fondneſs for her. Irritated by her perfidy, he was determined to diſgrace the woman, who had been guilty of a baſeneſs ſo mean, and ſo contemptible, for the mere purpoſe of feeding her vanity, by a paltry triumph over the affections of an honorable

norable and ingenuous mind. The perfidy of the Baroneſs was ſpread, with incredible celerity, through the polite and faſhionable circle which ſhe frequented. Thoſe who had experienced the dexterity with which ſhe was in the habit of directing the ſhafts of ill-natured inſinuation, and ſatire, were highly gratified in the opportunity that preſented itſelf, of retaliating on her character with the ſame weapons. None were diſpleaſed with the circumſtance; as an anecdote of this ſort ſo conſiderably augmented the ſtock of calumny, which was the life and ſpirit of their ſocieties.

As for the lady herſelf, ſhe called to

her aid, on this occaſion, thoſe vigorous powers of impudence which ſeldom deſerted her. But at preſent they proved ineffectual. The ſevereſt reflections were made on her reputation; and one might have imagined, from the vehemence with which her conduct was reprobated, that, in the caprice and viciſſitudes of Pariſian affectations, it was on a ſudden become a new faſhion to adopt the diſcourſe of the moſt exalted virtue.

The Baroneſs thought, however, that a temporary retreat from the metropolis was adviſable; that during her abſence the tranſaction would probably be forgotten, and the *moral* re-

reſentments of her faſhionable friends exhauſted in the ill-natured ſneers, and the uſual quantity of ſcandal, which would expire with the novelty of the amuſement.

There were other motives alſo for her paying this unexpected viſit; the gratification of venting her ſpleen upon the Marquis, and the beautiful Counteſs; and the opportunity ſhe would have of diſperſing the myſterious hiſtory, which had been communicated to her under freſh injunctions of ſecrecy by Nouville.

She had never given herſelf any trouble to inquire into the probability

of the ſtory. It ſufficiently anſwered her purpoſe, that the circulation of it would diſturb the repoſe of the two amiable lovers. Nothing, therefore, ſurprized her more, than that Tourville ſhould ſtill perſevere in his gallantries to the Counteſs, or that the Counteſs ſhould betray any ſymptoms of affection for Tourville. Reaſoning from what ſhe felt in her own boſom, this worthy lady could not but be aſtoniſhed at an attachment, of a kind ſo totally unintelligible to her, as to be devoid of that mutual paſſion, which, according to her notions, conſtituted the whole meaning and definition of love.

The Baroneſs introduced herſelf without

without any feelings of ſhame or humiliation. In truth, ſhe had not a ſentiment which approximated ſo near to virtue; and although the reception ſhe met with was evidently cold, and uninviting, ſhe appeared to be unconſcious of the indignity. The theatrical repreſentation at length began. The Counteſs exhibited, in the moſt ſtriking manner, the paſſions of the character which ſhe perſonated. Her beauty, and the admirable ſkill which ſhe diſplayed, drew forth from her audience clamors of approbation, and tears of emotion. The Baroneſs, however, could not, or affected not to feel the raptures which the intereſting actreſs inſpired. Perhaps the reaſon

of her apathy, was her inſenſibility to the charms of poetry, and of virtuous ſentiments, or her mortification at the ſuperior beauty of the lovely Counteſs. Tourville undertook alſo the part of a lover; and when the incidents of the drama brought them together, the genuine emotions of love ſeemed to ſtruggle, as it were, for utterance.—The ſpectators for a while forgot the fiction of the comedy. They thought they obſerved the happy and delightful communications of two ſouls, that were really enamoured of each other.

But the Baroneſs could not comprehend this. It ſeemed to her a moſt extraordinary myſtery, that theſe perſons

ſons ſhould really love each other; and ſhe attributed the energy and ſpirit of their performance to counterfeited and affected feelings. At the concluſion of the drama, the company, in different groupes, walked into the garden; the heat of the weather being ſomewhat more than uſually oppreſſive.

In the mean while, the Counteſs de Clairmont, overpowered by the fatigue of her exertions, had withdrawn from the party to a favorite grotto, in which ſhe had frequently found that temporary ſecluſion from ſociety, and that ſtillneſs of repoſe, of which thoſe who love are naturally enamoured. The coolneſs

coolneſs of the ſpot, and the deſire of indulging the train of meditations now ſo familiar to her, directed her ſteps towards it on this occaſion. It was ſituated at the termination of a ſmall viſta of beech-trees; the path to it lay through ſeveral irregular windings, at ſome diſtance from the walks which the company frequented. It was embowered under a ſort of canopy, which was formed by the arches of trees, covered with their verdant foliage down to the ground, and from which the murmurs and buſtle of the world ſeemed to have been effectually excluded. Nothing was heard but the voice of the cricket, or the ſighing of the breeze; and, except the ſounds

which,

which, floating on the ſummer air, make the ſtillneſs of the night more ſolemn, an univerſal ſilence was ſpread about the ſpot, and nature ſlumbered, in voluptuous repoſe, around it. The grot ſeemed to realize the enchanted bowers, of which the poets give ſuch faſcinating deſcriptions. In one word, it was equally adapted for the ſolitary lover, who retired thither to indulge the reveries of ſilent contemplation, or to thoſe happy intercourſes, when, bleſt by the preſence of each other, they eſcaped from the world to the paradiſe of mutual enjoyment.

There is a ſort of impulſe, which vibrates on the heart of the lover, and which

which is endued with almoſt a ſuper-natural energy. No ſooner had the Marquis perceived the abſençe of the Counteſs, than his ſteps were impelled inſtinctively to the ſpot ſhe had choſen. His ardor to meet her in a place ſo favorable to the communications of love, while it lifted him almoſt above the ground as he walked, made him unobſervant of the Baroneſs, who was following at a very ſmall diſtance behind him. Concealed by the darkneſs of the place, this malignant woman cautiouſly concealed herſelf in a ſpot, where, without being noticed, ſhe could hear all that paſſed betwixt them; where, pleaſed with her ſtratagem, ſhe waited with anxious expectation

pectation to hear ſomething, that might unravel her doubts, as to the myſterious kind of love ſhe attributed to the Counteſs.

"Tourville!" ſhe exclaimed, "Tour-
"ville, my deareſt friend, your regrets,
"the ſources of the inquietude that
"rends your boſom, are not concealed
"from me. Why ſhould you ſtrive
"to perſevere in a diſſimulation,
"through the veil of which it is ſo
"eaſy to penetrate? Can love de-
"light in concealment?"

"Sometimes," returned the Mar-
quis, "ſuch are the conditions im-
"poſed upon it, that it muſt fly to
"artifices

"artifices it abhors." He endeavoured to reſtrain the ardour with which he uttered this ſentence. Incoherent expreſſions, which were not unnoticed by the Counteſs, ſtruggled for utterance. "What a wretch am "I!" he continued. "Had I ut-"tered the word that trembled on my "lips, you would for ever hate me. "Moſt cruel neceſſity! My happineſs "depends on my diſſimulation."

"Oh, Tourville!" replied Madame de Clairmont, "that ſentiment but ill "becomes you. Yet I forgive the "contradictions, the errors, almoſt the "very crimes of love. But I lament "that you ſhould ſtill be unhappy;

"and

"and I almoſt hate myſelf, for the "ſentiment with which I have in- "ſpired you; ſince it renders the "agony, that preys on your ſoul, "more ſevere, and incurable." Tears impeded her utterance; and her impatient lover, inflamed and agitated by the unequivocal proofs of attachment with which his miſtreſs had favored him, was on the very point of diſcovering the ſecret, which had impoſed on the affections of the woman whom he adored, though he was conſcious, that the diſſolution of the myſtery would be the deſtruction of thoſe very feelings, which ſhe had indicated towards him.

Of

Of this interview not a word eſcaped the ear of the Baroneſs. From the energy with which Tourville ſpoke, the ardor of his manner, and the paſſion that ſeemed but half ſtifled in his boſom, ſhe began to doubt, whether Tourville had really ſuſtained the misfortune, the detail of which had been imparted to her; and whether ſuch an enamoured lover could in fact be curſed with ſo ſevere and horrible a deprivation. She was almoſt ſtruck dead with ſurprize, when ſhe heard this lifeleſs, contemptible being exclaim, with the tranſport of the moſt unequivocal paſſion, "Oh, cruel "and perverſe deſtiny! Is it poſſible, "enchanting woman, that you can

"prefer

" prefer the wretched victim of diſ-
" grace, and affliction, ſuch as I am
" repreſented to you, to the fond and
" impatient lover, ready to ruſh, with
" the ſacred phrenzy of love, into the
" paradiſe of your arms; eager to
" pluck, from the bliſsful lap of your
" affections, the fruit of a long and
" painful expectation?"

" Alas!" ſaid the Counteſs, " if
" your affections accorded with mine,
" were they cemented together by
" thoſe pure and unpolluted ſympa-
" thies, with which Heaven itſelf is
" delighted, you would have ſpared
" my heart the torture of that queſ-
" tion. Let me, however, be unequi-

" vocal.

" vocal. Henceforth it will not be " poſſible to miſunderſtand my mean- " ing. I loved you, Tourville, in " your gay and happy moments; but " I had reſolution to ſhun you: mis- " fortune has rendered you the ob- " ject of affections, which are the " more perfect, and more conſummate, " becauſe their current is not checked " by the apprehenſions, and terrors, " with which they were formerly " mingled."

No human language can deſcribe the anguiſh of the Marquis, at this declaration. To be loved, and not to be rewarded as a lover; to be the object of unſubſtantial affections, of a ſenti-

ſentiment, to which a young man, in the overflowing exuberance of love, and paſſion, could not annex any meaning; to have ſubmitted to the degrading taſk of a diſſimulation, ſo painful to his feelings, and yet to be as far as ever from the purpoſe which he ſought to obtain by the ſtratagem, formed a group of perplexing and unpleaſant ſenſations in his boſom, which it is impoſſible to deſcribe. He was reduced to the alternative of hopeleſs ſilence, or the loſs of the woman he loved. To the certainty of loſing her for ever, he was compelled, therefore, to prefer the torture of perſiſting in the deception.

The

The Counteſs remarked his agitation, and preſſed him to reply.

"My lovely friend," he exclaimed, after a pauſe, during which the utmoſt anxiety was imprinted in his countenance, "do I not depend on your "compaſſion for the continuance of "your affection? May not ſome happier admirer inſpire you with a paſſion, which you look on me as incapable of infuſing?" "Never, never!" exclaimed the Counteſs. "Another "than Tourville—Impoſſible! My "imagination can hardly bear the "tranſient idea of it. Beloved of my "ſoul, can you ſuſpect me of loving "another, of transferring to another

" god, as it were, with idolatrous im-
" piety, the homage, the vows, which
" my heart has conſecrated to you?
" What glory can be more gratifying,
" what triumph more captivating,
" than to be bleſt with your affec-
" tions! Yes, Tourville, I ſhall be
" the envy of my ſex."

The Baroneſs, who had liſtened to this exclamation, could ſcarcely refrain from laughing, when ſhe overheard ſentiments, from the lips of a woman, which ſhe could not think very congenial to the female heart, nor likely to be inſpired by the unhappy and mutilated Marquis.

" But," continued the Counteſs,

"I have at length determined, with "a reſolution worthy of me, to con- "vince you of my eternal, my un- "fading affection for you."—

"Juſt Heaven! what is it you "mean?"

"To abandon the world, my dear "Tourville, but to abandon it with "you; with you to fly the interrup- "tions of ſociety, the yoke of cere- "mony, and the entanglements of "cuſtom. In ſome ſecluded re- "treat——"

She was continuing this ardent ſtyle of expreſſion, when the approach of a party towards the grotto put an end to their

their conference. The Baroneſs retired from her concealment, and joined the lovers, who ſoon mingled with the reſt of the company.

The Baroneſs, however, ſpared no labour to circulate the particulars of the converſation ſhe had overheard in the grotto. Her inſinuations, however, were utterly diſregarded; the general appearance, the manlineſs, and the dignity of Tourville, being amply ſufficient to repel the calumny; more eſpecially as it had no other foundation, than the aſſertions of the Baroneſs.

The conduct of theſe extraordinary lovers had, in the mean time, pro-

duced a very deep impreſſion on the mind of this lady. She was perplexed by a ſcene ſhe had never before witneſſed, and aſtoniſhed at the declaration of ſentiments to which ſhe had been wholly a ſtranger. Habituated to conſider love only as the inſtrument by which the paſſions were to be gratified, ſhe had never conceived it to exiſt in an attitude ſo ſingular and extraordinary.

The Baroneſs, however, was now occupied by a freſh object, that engaged her reflections. She had left Paris with a woman, who had for three months received the moſt aſſiduous marks of gallantry and attention from the

the Duke. During that time he had exhibited a degree of conſtancy, and earneſtneſs in the purſuit, which aſtoniſhed all, who knew the levity and fickleneſs of his nature. Abſence, and the engagements which ſucceed each other ſo rapidly in the life of a man of pleaſure, had in ſome ſort ſubdued the fierceneſs of his paſſion; but there yet lurked in his boſom ſome ſleeping embers, which might have been again awakened, had Madame de Derville been deeply ſkilled in the ſcience of the human heart. But ſhe had adopted a mode of procedure not at all calculated to effect her purpoſe. Enraged at his caprice, ſhe had perpetually reproached him with the ſud-

den and unaccountable abatement of his affection. Reproaches of this nature, to a man of the Duke's caſt and temperament of mind, were the moſt horrible of all perſecutions. The only means of regaining his tranquillity, that occurred to him, were at once to eſcape from her importunities. Abſence, however, did not afford him the refuge he ſought. Reproaches ſtill followed him in long epiſtles, which were filled with complaints, and imprecations. He determined no longer to read them; till the lady was tired, at length, of writing letters which produced no reply, and made no impreſſion. I need not obſerve, therefore, that her unexpected appear-

ance,

ance, with the Baroneſs, was a ſource of conſiderable embarraſſment to Nouville; particularly as he was in purſuit of a new and more intereſting object.

The Baroneſs was in the confidence of this lady. She had imparted to her the whole hiſtory of the amour, and had conſulted her upon the mode of conduct neceſſary to be purſued.

The Baroneſs herſelf had long ceaſed to love the Duke. Whether the paſſion ſhe had felt, had been in its nature periſhable, and precarious, or whether ſhe had ſeen the abſurdity of fixing her affections on an object

which was beyond her reach, ſhe had entirely laid aſide the ſentiments which ſhe had once entertained for him. But the embarraſſment in which, by the introduction of her friend into the party, ſhe occaſioned to the Duke, gave her a proſpect of enjoying that malevolent gratification, which was the ſource of inexhauſtible amuſement to her, and the moſt fitted for her taſte, and talents. She ſoon perceived that her friend had a rival; and ſhe intimated the diſcovery. But the Baroneſs might have ſpared herſelf the trouble of the communication. It had been already made to Madame de Derville. It had been imparted to her by indications, which thoſe in love

love ſo eaſily and readily underſtand. There is an exquiſite ſenſibility in woman to alarm and ſuſpicion, when ſhe perceives that the heart of the man ſhe loves is not wholly within her power.

She was conſiderably chagrined, when ſhe firſt ſaw her rival, to find her ſo beautiful. As for the Duke, he had by no means been unobſervant of the mortification, which Madame de Derville exhibited in her countenance; and apprehenſive of augmenting her ſuſpicions, he obſerved in the preſence of Flora an unuſual degree of ſilence, and reſerve. The tender boſom of Flora witneſſed new and unex-

perienced emotions, when for the firſt time ſhe remarked ſo extraordinary an air of coolneſs in Nouville. The chagrin of Madame de Derville was redoubled, by the penſive and languid traces of ſorrow, depictured in the face of her charming rival. The performance of the play did not in the leaſt abate it. In the impaſſioned parts of the dialogue, the Duke and Flora ſeemed to act too naturally. When the piece was concluded, ſhe took the Duke aſide, and began a ſeries of remonſtrances, which laſted ſo long, that Flora, who was alarmed at the length of the interview, could not abſtain from inquiring the reaſon of her detaining him ſo long in converſation.

verſation. It ſeemed to her, that the Duke could have no ſecrets in which ſhe ought not to participate.

Flora, at the age of fifteen, had never heard of the inconſtancy, and levity, which prevail ſo generally in the world of faſhion and gallantry. It appeared to her impoſſible that her lover ſhould deceive her. When, therefore, ſhe heard this lady talk in the language of reproach, and complaint, ſhe exclaimed, in the ſimplicity of her ſoul, "What is it that he has done? It is "impoſſible that he ſhould have com-"mitted any offence. He is too good, "and too amiable."

Madame Derville, at this exclamation, deſiſted from the reproaches, which ſhe was ſo profuſely pouring upon the Duke, and, addreſſing herſelf to Flora, communicated to her the whole ſtory of his perfidy; and, in a tone of affected commiſeration, intimated that ſhe herſelf would be the next dupe of his artifices. The charming Flora ſhed a flood of tears. Nouville was ready to burſt with ſhame and indignation; but not a word of reproof fell from the lips of Flora. Without uttering a ſyllable, ſhe flew to her aunt; to whom, in the ſimplicity of her youth, and the overflowings of an inexperienced heart, ſhe imparted all that had happened. "Let

"us

" us leave this place," ſhe exclaimed. " He is a ſeducer,—an intriguer!"

Language cannot adequately deſcribe the mingled tumult of indignation, and diſappointed wiſhes, which raged in the boſom of the antiquated guardian of Flora. Gifted as ſhe was with that penetration, which is always in ſome degree the characteriſtic of females of that age, ſhe had been duped, and baffled by his addreſs. She would have ſworn that Flora was only the *pretended* object of his affiduities; and that he had no other cares, no other emotions, but what her own charms had inſpired. To be at once ſo miſerably

ſerably undeceived, to be awakened from the anticipations ſhe had ſo fondly cheriſhed, was a misfortune ſhe was but little prepared to endure. Beſides, her reputation, which for ſo many years ſhe had preſerved with more than human conſtancy, was now in the hands of the young woman, over whoſe conduct ſhe had been appointed a guardian, and directreſs.

Flora was determined to go. "Yes," ſhe exclaimed, "I ſuffered him to ap-
"pear to be in love with you, becauſe
"you were my aunt; but, alas! he has
"another miſtreſs, and his affections
"for her cannot be pretended. Ne-
"ver,

"ver, never will I love him again!
"For heaven's ſake, take me away!"
—They ſoon took their departure.

This adventure did not contribute to render Madame Derville very amiable in the eyes of the Duke; nor was he ſparing in pointed inſinuations at the Baroneſs. Theſe two ladies, therefore, thought it adviſable to return to Paris; and it is needleſs to ſay, that their departure occaſioned but little regret to the party, of whom they ſo abruptly took their leave. Every attempt to renew the intrigue, from which Nouville had derived ſo much amuſement, was unſucceſsful. The young lady returned his letters unopened,

opened, with a billet expreſſed in theſe angry and indignant terms. "Give "yourſelf no further trouble in in- "quiring whether I love or hate you. "Never will I ſee you more. Your "pretended remorſe is thrown away "upon me. Your proteſtations are "ſuperfluous. Theſe are the laſt "words you will ever receive from "Flora."

But it is time to return once more to the Marquis, ſo worthy of happineſs. In vain did he endeavor to diſſemble the anguiſh which preyed in ſecret upon his ſoul. It was not unobſerved by the amiable woman for whom alone he lived. She was more

and

and more convinced, that the deſpondence, the marks of which ſhe perceived in his countenance, aroſe from the ſilent and corroding regrets which the conſciouſneſs of his own ſituation had conjured up in his boſom. Her reflections were now wholly occupied in carrying the project ſhe had conceived, of a ſeclufion from the world, into execution. What had fallen from Tourville, during their laſt interview, had confirmed her reſolution. During this interval ſhe had taught herſelf to conſider a retreat from ſociety, into the boſom of a ſolitude conſecrated by love, and in which they could find a refuge from a world which knew nothing of an affection ſo

pure

pure and ſacred as theirs, to be the only means of ſecuring her own happineſs, and that of the Marquis.

But there were obſtacles to the realization of the project, which could not fail of ſuggeſting themſelves to her mind. Their age, their mutual attachment, the natural propenſity of the world to exerciſe the moſt rigorous judgments, even on the moſt innocent actions, conſpired to ſhew her the imprudence of the determination. How could ſhe reconcile the variance betwixt her own ſentiments, and the artificial decencies of the world? The beſt plan that occurred to her, was that of procuring the ſanction of the General,

neral, by perſuading him to form one of the party. She inſtantly made the propoſal to him, and requeſted him to allot her, as the place of her retreat, ſome remote ſpot on one of his eſtates, the moſt diſtant from Paris. The good-natured veteran acceded to the propoſal. I need not ſay that Tourville agreed to it. He was almoſt maddened with tranſport. Nothing now remained, but to break it to the Princeſs. The Counteſs intimated it immediately to her friend, who was too much affected at the abrupt termination of her viſit, not to inquire into the reaſons of it, as well as to interrogate her as to the party in whoſe

ſociety

ſociety ſhe was about to take ſo ſudden a journey.

Madame Clairmont mentioned the General; but in pronouncing the name of Tourville, her lips faltered, and ſhe could ſcarcely articulate it.

"And is this all you have to com-
"municate to me?" exclaimed the Princeſs; at the ſame time embracing her, with tears of the moſt ardent friendſhip. The Counteſs loved her with the moſt unbounded affection; and, ſweet as the careſſes of friendſhip were to her, ſhe was almoſt enraptured, whilſt her amiable friend diſ-

diſcourſed on the praiſes of Tourville.

But theſe endearments were followed by ſerious remonſtrances. She exhorted her to reflect deliberately on the project ſhe had framed; to weigh the opinion of the world, the diſpleaſure of her relations, againſt the imagined happineſs ſhe ſo ardently expected. She obſerved that the preſence of the General was but a thin diſguiſe, through which malevolence might eaſily penetrate. "My dear "child," continued the Princeſs, "unite yourſelf to Tourville, and then "ſet out upon your journey. It is "the only hope of his exiſtence. It

"ought to be the object alſo of your "wiſhes."

"Alas," replied the Counteſs, "he "does not wiſh it! Perhaps he never "will."

"And yet you continue to ſee him! "Aſtoniſhing!"

"Ah, Madam, do not harbour a "thought ſo injurious to his honour! "It is the refinement of his love, the "almoſt ſublime purity of his affec- "tions, that forbids him even to che- "riſh the deſire of ſuch an union."

All this was totally inexplicable to the

the Princeſs. She liſtened with a very viſible look of concern, and ſympathy. To be in love with a young man, ſo intereſting as Tourville, without deſiring to be united to him, and yet to have projected a ſcheme of retirement from the world, in which he was to participate, appeared to her the very conſummation of imprudence.

The General, however, ſoon relieved her from her embarraſſment. When the Counteſs obſerved him to approach, ſhe ran to meet him, and conjured him to relate to the Princeſs all that concerned herſelf, and the Marquis; and at the ſame time left them toge-

together. The whole ſecret was now developed; the pretended ſtory of Tourville's ſufferings, and the purpoſe to which it was meant to be ſubſervient.

Intereſted beyond expreſſion at this extraordinary adventure, the Princeſs ſent for Tourville. What paſſed between the moſt paſſionate of lovers, and the ſincereſt friend of her whom he loved, may be eaſily imagined.

"What, my dear Marquis," ſhe exclaimed, "what is it that prevents "you from uniting yourſelf to the ob-"ject of your affections? Go; in-

"ſtantly

"ſtantly propoſe the immediate con-
"ſummation of your wiſhes to her: I
"will anſwer for her conſent."

"Alas!" replied Tourville, "can I
"offer myſelf as her huſband, while
"ſhe has ſuch unworthy ſuſpicions of
"me?"

The Marquis was irreſolute. He was fearful of deſtroying, by a premature diſſolution of the myſtery by which he had impoſed on her imagination, the project of happineſs he had framed.

The Counteſs joined them. "Why
"would you leave me?" ſaid the Prin-

ceſs, addreſſing herſelf to the Counteſs. "Do you ſincerely wiſh the happineſs "of Tourville?"—"Ah! Madam," replied that beautiful woman, "why "do you aſk me, whether I wiſh the "happineſs of one ſo dear to me?" She uttered this with an emotion, that was too viſible to leave any doubt as to what was paſſing in her boſom.

The Princeſs inſtantly ſeized the hands of each of the lovers, and united them. "'Tis thus only," ſhe exclaimed, "that Tourville can be "happy."

Tourville threw himſelf at the feet of his miſtreſs. Their looks, their ſilence,

ſilence, that mute delirium of the ſoul, which lovers only experience, cannot be deſcribed; nor would the deſcription be intelligible, but to thoſe who are privileged to think and feel above the lot of ordinary beings. They were left alone, by the kindneſs of their two friends, who ſeemed intent on the promotion of their felicity.

"Ah, Tourville! though I peruſe in "your countenance the characters of "an ineffable rapture, is it poſſible that "your ſenſations at this moment can "equal mine?"

She lifted up her eyes to heaven, as it were in gratitude, and conveyed the

hand of her lover to the heart that was throbbing with the emotions of a pure and holy affection.

"How bleſt am I!" ſhe continued; "almoſt above the higheſt conſum-"mation of human happineſs! Your "grief is at length ſubdued by the "force of a virtuous ſentiment. Our "hearts are united in a celeſtial wed-"lock, and the wiſhes of my Tourville "are bounded within the ſphere of its "ſpiritual and pure deſires."

The Marquis ſighed at theſe words, as they fell from her lips. "Alas!" he replied, "did you but "know——"

He

He had ſcarcely articulated theſe words, when the Princeſs and the General, who had heard, with the moſt eager ſolicitude, what had paſſed between the lovers, fearful that the delicacy of the Marquis would betray him, interrupted the continuance of the converſation.

On their entrance, the Counteſs threw herſelf into the arms of her friend, exclaiming, in a tone of inexpreſſible ſenſibility, "Moſt affectionate "of friends, never ſhall I repay the "kindneſs you have beſtowed upon "me. The ſenſations which vibrate "with joy upon my heart, are the off-"ſpring of your affection, and zeal for

" my happineſs. But, for heaven's
" ſake, aſſiſt me in relieving Tourville
" from the unworthy apprehenſions he
" has cheriſhed; apprehenſions he would
" never have imbibed, had he known
" the dominion he has over my heart."

The reſolution of the Marquis, however, was fixed, when the Duke appeared, and offered him congratulations on what had taken place. His doubts were at once diſſipated, and his boſom felt the pure and exalted ſerenity which reſults from the delightful aſſurances and hopes of a lover. In the fervor of this bliſsful anticipation, he ſaw no impediments to the future attainment of his wiſhes; and the Counteſs was

lifted

lifted into a world of ideal enjoyments, the contemplations of which diffuſed a mild and celeſtial tranquillity over her countenance.

It was inſtantly determined to write to the father of the Counteſs, M. de B***, whom they ſuppoſed to be at his chateau, a few miles from Paris. Each of them wrote a letter to that gentleman; the Marquis, to obtain his conſent to his marriage; the Counteſs, another to the ſame purpoſe; and the Princeſs and the Duke, to ſtrengthen by the recommendations of their friendſhip the petition of the lovers. M. de B***, however, had left his villa ſeveral days before the arrival of theſe

 letters,

letters, and was upon a viſit at the houſe of his friend the Baroneſs, at Paris. It is needleſs to repeat, that he had ſuffered this lady to obtain a powerful aſcendant over him. The object of the Baroneſs was obvious. She was a widow, who had no violent objections to another union; and as the father of the Counteſs was a man of opulence, ſhe had cheriſhed ſome latent hopes of obtaining him for her huſband.

M. de B*** had frequently reflected, with very uneaſy ſenſations, on the ſtrange and unaccountable reſolution which his daughter ſeemed to have taken. But he knew that her diſpo-

diſpoſition was tinctured with an unuſual degree of ſenſibility; and from this ſenſibility he deduced ſome very ſtrong hopes of her abandoning a vow apparently ſo inconſiſtent with the feelings of a young and beautiful woman. Nay, he had it himſelf in contemplation to encourage the addreſſes of a youthful cavalier, of good family and large eſtate, as a proper huſband for his daughter.

The contents of theſe letters, however, inſpired him with a joy bordering almoſt on rapture. The name of the Marquis was illuſtrious. The young nobleman had high rank, and ample fortune. The endowments of

his perſon, and the excellence of his underſtanding, were themes of the moſt laviſh panegyric. With the proſpect, therefore, of ſuch an union, his vanity, his avarice, and his ambition, were at once gratified.

In the overflowings of his joy, he could not abſtain from communicating the circumſtance to Madame Volmeul. She had ſcarce heard him to the end of the ſentence, before ſhe burſt out into the moſt convulſive fits of laughter. In a ſerious tone, the old gentleman inquired into the cauſe of her extraordinary merriment.

The Baroneſs continued her laughter.

ter. At length recovering herſelf, "My dear Sir," ſhe ſaid, "I have had "no opportunity of acquainting you "with an adventure ſo ſtrange, ſo "extravagant——"

Here ſhe redoubled her laughter. At length ſhe continued—"Your "daughter, my excellent friend, is in- "deed an angel. There is nothing "but her perſon which is of human "ſhape. Her mind is perfectly ſpiri- "tualized. As for my lord the Mar- "quis, I cannot undertake the taſk of "being his hiſtorian. His hiſtory is "compoſed of ſecrets, which I can "only relate to my own ſex." Here the voluble Baroneſs ſimpered. She

would have bluſhed, but unfortunately ſhe could not conjure up at command the ſuffuſion ſhe required; and which, if ſhe could have bluſhed, would ſcarcely have been ſeen amid the perennial redneſs, which the hand of her waiting woman every morning adminiſtered to her countenance.

But the importunities of M. de Verſan at laſt prevailed on her to relate the myſterious incident. She told the ſtory without much extenuation of the paſſages in it, at which her modeſty ſeemed to revolt. "In ſhort, my "dear friend," ſhe exclaimed, "Tour-"ville, who aſpires to the hand, and "has obtained the affections of your "daughter,

" daughter, is qualified for every cha-
" racter but that of a lover!"

When the Baroneſs had completed the circumſtantial relation of Tourville's misfortune, the father of the Counteſs was apparently agitated by the moſt furious indignation. " A " moſt ſentimental union indeed!" he exclaimed. " Has Tourville the au-
" dacity to claim the Counteſs, in
" the pride and bloom of youth and
" beauty, as his wife, when he is con-
" ſcious of an imperfection, which
" ought for ever to baniſh him from
" the ſociety and converſe of the whole
" ſex? What fruit can be expected
" from ſo unnatural a union? What

" hap-

" happineſs from the alliance of beauty
" to weakneſs, of vigor to decrepi-
" tude? What but the phantom of a
" ſickly and feveriſh happineſs; a
" barren bed, with its cold and joyleſs
" affections?"

The Baroneſs was very expert in the art of tormenting. To this effuſion of anger ſhe entered, by way of reply, into an ironical commendation of Tourville. " He is a moſt extraordi-
" nary man, ſurely! He knows how
" to love, in ſpite of his calamity;
" but then it is not a mortal love,—it
" is the love of happy ſouls, in the
" regions of the bleſt. The Counteſs,
" too, is the very creature of romance.

" She

"She would be ſhocked at the bare "imagination of vulgar love. They "will be moſt admirably matched."

"Never," interrupted the father. "If it be poſſible to prevent ſuch a "ridiculous union, nothing ſhall be "untried. Parental authority ſhall "be exerciſed againſt it." Here he burſt out of the apartment, and left the Baroneſs in a ſtate of aſtoniſhment at the emotion with which he received the communication.

During this time, Tourville and the charming Counteſs were waiting, with the moſt painful expectation, an anſwer to the letters that had been written

ten to her father. In their interviews with each other, they could not refrain from dark and melancholy forebodings. It ſeemed wholly unaccountable that M. de Verſan ſhould oppoſe their union. Love, however, in its deſponding moments, gathers together ten thouſand fears, and perturbations; and as it feeds on the improbabilities of hope, ſo is it overwhelmed by the ſlighteſt impediments to its wiſhes.

At one of theſe converſations, the Duke ſtole upon them unperceived; and obſerving the melancholy preſentiment that ſeemed to caſt a gloom over their minds, propoſed a walk to the hermitage; a ſpot which had been conſe-

conſecrated to their hearts, and the memory of which was eternally dear to them, as it had witneſſed the reunion of the lovers, after a cruel and ſevere ſeparation. They readily acceded to the propoſal.

When they reached the canal, the ſerenity of the air, and the coolneſs of the breezes which undulated on its waters, invited them to a ſhort expedition down the ſtream. The boat, however, was on the oppoſite ſide; and the Duke and Tourville ran to the chateau, to give orders to ſome of the ſervants to prepare the veſſel for their excurſion, requeſting the Counteſs to

remain

remain on the ſame ſpot till their return.

What was their aſtoniſhment, when, on coming back to the place, the Counteſs was no where to be found! Tourville was diſtracted. What could have befallen her? He accuſed heaven, and execrated himſelf; and imagining ſhe might have fallen into the ſtream, was with ſome difficulty prevented from plunging himſelf in. In vain did the Duke ſuggeſt, as a reaſon for her abſence, that, impatient of waiting for them, ſhe had gone towards the chateau by another path. At laſt they obſerved a little dumb girl, the

the daughter of the gardener, crying at a ſmall diſtance from them. The poor little creature, half dead with affright, by ſigns, which the Marquis too well comprehended, acquainted them that ſhe had ſeen ſome perſons violently dragging the Counteſs from the ſpot where they had left her. The place, indeed, was well calculated for the execution of ſuch a plot; being within a few yards of the park gate, which opened into the public road; and as they had been abſent more than a quarter of an hour, the ruffians might have been already beyond the reach of purſuit.

In the wildeſt agony, they flew to the

the Princeſs, and informed her of the myſterious event that had happened. The whole chateau was almoſt inſtantaneouſly alarmed; and the ſervants were directly ready to follow the raviſhers. The girl gave them as preciſe directions as ſhe could convey to them, of the road they had taken; and the phrenſied Marquis, the Duke, and the whole party, ſet forward to overtake them.

The General, whoſe infirmities had prevented him from ſallying out on this expedition, remained with the Princeſs in the moſt deplorable ſtate of ſuſpenſe and anxiety. They waited with the moſt lingering impatience for the

the return of the party. The purſuers returned at midnight, with diſappointment on their features. Their journey had been fruitleſs; there was no clue that led to the diſcovery.

I ſhall not deſcribe the ſituation of the Marquis. It was a ſtate of wild, ſpeechleſs deſpair; and the conſequences of it might have been dreadful, had not a courier arrived with letters, one to the Princeſs, the other to the General. The ſuperſcription was inſtantly recognized. They came from the father of Madame Clairmont. What was their ſurprize, when, in the hand writing of that gentleman, they read the following words. "Be com-

"forted.

"forted. The Counteſs is in good "hands. Be not alarmed for her "ſafety. It was the interpoſition of "parental authority, which ſnatched "her from your protection. I dreaded "the prepoſterous union, that was "meditated betwixt my daughter, "and the ſhadow, the ſemblance of a "human being. I have deſtined her "for a huſband worthy of her youth, "her charms, and her virtues. The "choice of her father will, I doubt "not, meet the approbation of her "friends."

This letter was by no means likely to aſſuage the torments of Tourville; on the contrary, it inflamed them to a degree

degree of intolerable agony. He curſed, in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, the ruinous and blind counſels of Nouvelle, lamented that he ſhould have been the dupe of ſo ridiculous and extravagant an artifice, and reproached him as the author of his misfortune. The Duke replied with his uſual *ſang-froid*; and ſtill held out to him the neceſſity of a little patience, till the ſtorm was diſperſed.

It was now determined, that the whole party ſhould proceed early in the morning to Paris. Tourville, whoſe impatience could brook no delay, was at M. de Verſan's houſe before them. He ruſhed into his apartment

ment as ſoon as Verſan had ariſen. He was received with the moſt mortifying coolneſs. He began, in the moſt pathetic terms, to complain of the miſinterpretations under which he laboured. "Your daughter," ſaid he, "is the pattern of perfection. I adore "her. I ſcruple not to confeſs it." Here the old man interrupted him.

"My Lord Marquis, I am far from "being diffident of your ſentiments "towards my daughter. I know alſo "that ſhe bears you a very ſtrong and "lively affection. But I am ſur-"prized and inſulted, that you ſhould "claim my daughter in ſuch a maimed "and infirm condition, as wholly un-

"fits

" fits you for the title and character
" of a huſband."

The Marquis was about to interrupt him, when the Duke, the Princeſs, and the General, were announced. Conjecturing the ſubject of their diſcourſe, " M. Verſan," ſaid the Duke abruptly, " Your reception of the
" Marquis, and your diſapprobation
" of the alliance, I cannot reprove.
" Your ears have been impoſed on by
" a moſt falſe and unfounded narra-
" tive. I am the inventor of it: nor
" ſhall Tourville and the Counteſs be
" victims to it."

He then recapitulated the whole hiſtory of the deception. He mentioned the indecent and hateful advances of the Baroneſs to Tourville; the ſuſpicion he had at firſt excited, and afterwards confirmed, for the ſake of emancipating the lovers from her odious perſecution; and that Tourville was neceſſitated to permit the continuance of the fraud, by the fear of loſing the woman whom he idolized.

The features of truth were evident in this relation. Verſan was convinced of the miſtake he had cheriſhed, and not a little chagrined at the infidelity of the Baroneſs, whoſe affections he fooliſhly imagined had been entirely

entirely devoted to himself. With the utmost tenderness he embraced the Marquis, and with tears of gratitude acknowledged himself proud of the honor, which, by seeking the connexion, he had rendered to his family. "Above all," said he, "you have "rescued me from the fangs of the "Baroness."

Tourville's transports were violent, when Versan addressed these words to him:—"One condition I impose on "you, Marquis," he continued. "Let "me make an experiment of my "daughter's sincerity. Let her not "be undeceived, till the marriage is "celebrated."

From the time of her being carried away from the chateau, that beautiful woman had remained a cloſe priſoner at her father's. She was agitated by inexpreſſible anguiſh, and exhauſted nature was almoſt ſinking under the weight of her ſorrows, when a ſummons inſtantly to attend her father, rouzed her from a ſtate of torpid and frozen inſenſibility. She obeyed with apprehenſion. What were her feelings when M. Verſan met her, and joined her hand to that of an enraptured lover!

A ſcene of delicious extaſy followed. Deſpair ſucceeded by joy,—by joy the moſt full and unexpected,—the ſullen

fore-

forebodings of grief at once chaſed away by the radiance of the moſt delightful expectation! It was all enchantment!

This happy groupe interchanged with each other the moſt lively expreſſions of mutual congratulations, at the felicity to which they had contributed, and which they participated with Tourville, and his enchanting Counteſs. It had been determined, that their union ſhould be celebrated in two days. The Marquis fixed the moſt expreſſive looks of affection on the woman in whom all his hopes ſeemed to be centered, and who ſeemed endued with a more than mor-

tal influence over the deſtinies of his life. They were looks which the Counteſs could not fail to interpret; and ſhe anſwered them by glances, in which he might peruſe the moſt ample and overflowing aſſent to the arrangement.

The party were about to diſperſe. But the Duke de Nouville, before he left Paris, could not forbear the gratification of a ſort of good-natured ſpleen, in relating to the Baroneſs the happineſs of which he had been the ſpectator. What was the ſurpriſe of that lady, when ſhe heard the Duke gravely acknowledge the fabrication of a tale, which had ſo long impoſed on her

her credulity, and gratified her envy. Nor was ſhe much pleaſed when the Duke made a few ſarcaſtic animadverſions on the facility with which ſhe believed ſo ridiculous an impoſture. At firſt ſhe received this communication with a diſdainful ſilence; but the indignation of offended vanity, in having been made the inſtrument of the fraud, at length broke out into the moſt vehement and reproachful expreſſions. The reflection alſo, that the ſudden coldneſs of M. de Verſan, and the failure of her ſtratagem on that gentleman, was owing to his having been made acquainted with the circumſtance, contributed in no ſlight degree to exaſperate her feelings. She

cloſed a ſpeech of volatile abuſe with a peremptory injunction never to viſit her again; a command to which the Duke ſignified his obedience with the moſt mortifying ſerenity.

Nouville ſoon arrived at the chateau of the Princeſs. Tourville had been but a very ſhort time before him. Happy lovers! A multitude of bliſsful ſenſations throbbed in their boſoms: they were the ſenſations which aroſe from the oblivion of their former anxieties, and the recollections of the paſt contraſted with the enjoyments of the preſent; while every minute, as it rolled along, ſeemed to bring them nearer to the period towards which they

they looked with the moſt delightful anticipations. At length the day arrived; but an eternity ſeemed to intervene in this ſhort interval, and the courſe of time to have been arreſted, in the long and lingering night that preceded the day appointed for their nuptials.

The holy expectation of love ſpread over the countenance of Madame de Clairmont the ſweeteſt and moſt modeſt effuſion. The animation which beamed on the features of her lover, formed an intereſting contraſt to the ſoft and feminine emotions which played with a chaſter radiance on her cheeks. As ſhe advanced towards the

altar, on which their vows were to be conſecrated to love, her knees tottered beneath her, and it was with ſome difficulty that Tourville ſupported her. Then their trembling hands were united; and as they took the oath that joined them to each other, they thought that heaven itſelf opened to receive them. If the pureſt offering that aſcends to heaven be the incenſe of two affectionate hearts, the vows of theſe lovers were heard with peculiar regard, and complacency; for they were the offerings of hearts expanding with mutual love, and acknowledging, before Heaven, their gratitude for the choiceſt of its inſpirations. They were unpolluted by the mixture of groſs

and

and intereſted feelings, and ſeemed to have been derived from the hallowed and ſerene affections of angelic natures. Innocent feſtivities and recreations concluded the celebration of theſe ſolemnities; and the love which glowed within the boſoms of Tourville and his lovely Counteſs, appeared already to have reached the period devoted to the pureſt of enjoyments.

I need not obſerve, that they were mutually eager to retire from the company which ſurrounded them. The period at length arrived, and they were left alone with each other. Nor ſhall I attempt, in human language, to deſcribe the mingled agitations, the

throbbing perplexities, and the delicious doubts, of this enchanting moment.

"Moſt adorable lover!" exclaimed the Marchioneſs Tourville to her impaſſioned huſband, "Can you conceive "my bliſs? Is it at length permitted "me, after ſo cruel an interval of fear, "and of delicacy, to proclaim to the "world the triumph of my affec-"tions?"

The Marquis anſwered, or rather attempted to anſwer, this enraptured exclamation; but paſſion ſuſpended his utterance, and he faintly murmured the extaſies of his happineſs. Deli-

cacy

cacy interpoſed awhile a barrier to the torrent of his feelings; but at length, with an emotion altogether involuntary, he caught the Counteſs in his arms, and fixed on her conſenting lips the kiſſes of a fierce and uncontrollable paſſion. The burning current of the moſt extatic love ran with impetuous fury through the whole frame of the lovers.

But Tourville could no longer parley with his own emotions. He threw himſelf at her feet, and was on the point of imploring her to make him the happieſt of mortals. "Is it "poſſible," he exclaimed, "that your "reſerve

"reſerve ſhould ſtill ſurvive this moſt
"delightful of moments? Arbiter of
"my life, do you ſtill conſider me
"as the object only of a refined
"and exalted friendſhip; and may I
"not hope, if the misfortune which
"you ſuppoſe that I have ſuffered be
"only imaginary, that your friend-
"ſhip would be kindled into a warmer
"affection?"

"Ah, Marquis," ſhe returned, "I
"live on your looks! I peruſe in
"your countenance the image of my
"future happineſs. While all my
"hopes are centered in you, while I
"ſcarcely exiſt apart from my Tour-
"ville,

"ville, can I form one wiſh, or in-
"dulge one imagination, beyond
"him?"

"Well, then," replied Tourville, in a tone of deſperation, "hide from "my intoxicated eyes the charms which "tranſport me into madneſs. Forbid "me the dangerous freedoms which "enervate and ſicken my ſoul; and "which lead to the horrors of diſap-"pointment, through the extaſies of "happineſs."

Here the Marchioneſs ſtopped him. She attempted to ſoothe his affliction in tones of compaſſion, and conſola-tion. "Ah, no!" ſaid the Marquis

to himſelf, " how can I ſuffer a flame " like this to conſume me. Can I " yet ſpread over my feelings the veil " of a diſſimulation which it were " death to practiſe." Such were the emotions of Tourville. In this phrenzy of his mind, he had actually framed a reſolution of retiring from a preſence which was lighted up with fires ſo dangerous to his repoſe. But a ſigh from the woman he adored, recalled him from a reſolution, which love had rendered ineffectual. Her fine eyes, gliſtening with tears, awakened him to a ſenſe of his weakneſs; and he internally acknowledged the impracticability of vows which paſſion reſiſted.

The

The conference was interrupted by the entrance of her father. To him they addreſſed the effuſions of ſouls penetrated with filial gratitude, in the moſt fervid expreſſions; and, after an interview of a few minutes, returned with him to the company they had left.

The feelings of a lover, on theſe occaſions, are made up of diſcordant ſenſations; and in the very delirium of hope, he trembled at the proſpect of its conſummation. The Marchioneſs ſighed; and as ſhe was following the Princeſs, who offered to conduct her to her apartment, her lover would have witneſſed the regret with which ſhe left him, had the contemplations

in

in which he was abſorbed given him leiſure for any other reflection, than that which rivetted him to the ſpot on which he ſtood. The Princeſs requeſted him to ſuffer her to remain a few moments alone with the Marchioneſs. He returned no anſwer; for he perceived not that ſhe was addreſſing him. "I lament," ſaid this amiable woman, "the anxiety and "the ſuſpenſe you are ſuffering. But "rely upon the exertions of my friend-"ſhip in the cauſe ſo intereſting to "your feelings."

The Marquis received a ſort of cordial from theſe words; a mingled emotion, however, of doubt, uncertainty, and

and apprehenſion, remained in his boſom. But he obeyed the commands of the Princeſs. In this ſtate of internal tumult he remained ſome time, when Henrietta (the female attendant of the Marchioneſs) entered the apartment with a myſterious look. Tourville obſerved her entrance as an auſpicious omen; imagining that the period of the cold and cruel reſtraint to which he had ſubmitted, was now over. Scarcely had Henrietta entered the room, ere the enraptured Tourville poured upon her the benedictions of a heart expanding with the ardors of the moſt eager and impatient love. "Cruel, tormenting delay!" he exclaimed. "Is this the time for the

"inter-

" interpoſition of chilling delays? Let " me fly to the happineſs which is " treaſured up for me, and which I " have purchaſed by the long and " lingering ſervitude of ſo many days " of expectation!"

He darted, or rather flew from the apartment. Henrietta endeavoured to explain the meſſage with which ſhe had been entruſted. It amounted to a prohibition. It communicated to him a poſitive reſtraint upon the deſires with which his pulſes were throbbing. He ſpurned at the prohibition; he deſpiſed the reſtraint; and attempted to fly to the object of his adoration.

The

The faithful female attempted to remonſtrate. Remonſtrances were ineffectual. At length ſhe gave him a letter, which he opened with the moſt furious trepidation. It contained matter, which was by no means calculated to allay the eagerneſs of Tourville's paſſion. It ſtill talked to him of a myſterious and celeſtial ſentiment, in which nothing of human feeling was mixed, and which ſcorned the debaſement of human ſenſations. The contents of this epiſtle operated as a ſerious diſappointment to the Marquis. Heated with hope, intoxicated with deſire, and juſt arrived within the reach of the bliſs after which he panted, it ſeemed as if the demon of a cold

cold and unrelenting chaſtity, had blaſted the completion of his wiſhes. Still, however, beneath this ſentimental and platonic rapture, ſomething of mortal paſſion ſeemed to lurk. Tourville knew how to interpret it.

The Marquis expreſſed conſiderable anguiſh in his geſture and his countenance. He was worked up to a demoniac wildneſs in his features, and his language. Affrighted at his agitation, and fearful of its conſequences, Henrietta ran for the aſſiſtance of the Duke. Nouville calmly remonſtrated with him. Tourville diſdained his counſels. "For Heaven's ſake, my "dear Marquis," ſaid the Duke, "exert

" exert a little ſtoiciſm. You are now " on the very threſhold of the temple. " Forbear, by premature and injudi- " cious precipitation, to offend the " divinity that reſides within it. Pre- " pare her by degrees."

I think that I hear ſome of my readers blaming me for drawing a character like the Counteſs. " Cold, " unmeaning chaſtity!" exclaims one. " Moſt unattainable, impoſſible plato- " niſm!" ejaculates another. " Shame- " ful affectation!" cries a third; and with the laſt I fear the greater part of the female world will concur. But have patience, my good friends. In the pourtraying of characters, it is the duty

duty of an author to be conſiſtent to himſelf, and the perſon he is repreſenting. I introduced the Counteſs as an extraordinary woman; a woman of uncommon ſentiments; of feelings, of which the droſs and ſenſuality were waſhed away. I have exhibited her as a miracle of love, of conſtancy, and affection. She loves more than woman ever loved; and, in the progreſs of her love, endures more than woman ever endured. She encounters temptations, which would overwhelm other women; and at laſt, when fate has placed the object of her love within her reach, when ſhe ſeems to have arrived at the very goal to which ſhe has aſpired, ſhe ſuppreſſes, with a diſdainful

ful dignity the voice of vulgar, and ſenſual paſſion. Such is the woman I have drawn. If the rareneſs of ſuch a mind, the eccentricity of ſuch a character be objected to me, they who take the exception cannot comprehend the object of theſe pages, nor diſcern the moral to which they conduce. They who reliſh nothing but what is human, nothing but what belongs to the beaten round, and contracted circle of their own experience, who conſult their own hearts before they can believe elevated examples of virtue, and finding there nothing like that of which they read, ſhake their heads, and cry out that it is impoſſible, will

not reliſh the ſimple narrative which I have here recorded.

Happy Counteſs! you are now enjoying the ſublime pleaſures of an unſhaken and triumphant virtue. You have quelled the perturbations of feelings which nature herſelf has infuſed into human boſoms. You have put to flight the wild and licentious emotions which lead only to ſhort-lived, and fugitive enjoyments, the tumults of which poiſon the very pleaſure they communicate. How ſuperior to your unhappy huſband! Inflamed with the fury of the paſſions, he is tortured beyond expreſſion, by the purity and chaſtity of your ſoul. He has not been

been taught to conſider marriage as the union of the heart, inſtead of the alliance of the ſenſes. Remonſtrate with him on the unreaſonableneſs of his deſires. Adminiſter the remedies of a wiſdom which, flowing from your lips, will penetrate to his heart; talk to him in the language of a philoſophy, which clothed in your expreſſions, and breathed from your mouth, will find its way with full conviction to his underſtanding.

But truth has impoſed conditions upon my pen; and theſe I am forbidden to violate. I would gladly have held up the conduct of the Counteſs as an example of purity unmixed with the

the paſſions, with which ſhe maintained ſo long a ſtruggle. It is prohibited, however, to the human nature, to emulate the ſanctity of the divine. There is a ſummit of virtue, on which humanity grows giddy. The ſtorm of the paſſions beats againſt it, and it falls beneath the ſhock.

The Marquis was agonized at the cold remonſtrances of the Duke. "You kill me," he exclaimed, "with "theſe lingering delays; theſe unin-"telligible delicacies you throw in "my way." "I confeſs," replied his friend, "I confeſs that it is mortify-"ing in the extreme. A huſband "and yet no huſband! But the fan-

"cies

" cies of a woman muſt be indulged—
" her humours ſoothed. Do not
" deſpond. If I know the nature of
" woman, this ſentimental ſtruggle
" will not be laſting."

" Executioner, murderer of my
" repoſe!" replied Tourville impe-
tuouſly, " have you ſworn to deſtroy
" me? But I have reſolved. I will
" claim the privilege of our marri-
" age."

The Duke perſiſted in his exhorta-
tions to patience. " What," ſaid he,
" would you break in upon her tran-
" quillity, while ſhe is in cloſe con-
" verſe with the Princeſs, the friend
" of

" of her boſom? You have to deal " with gentle and delicate emotions. " The leaſt breath of unſeaſonable " and unlicenſed paſſion diſturbs and " agitates them."

Tourville, furious almoſt to phrenzy, ſtrode acroſs the room with looks of the wildeſt diſappointment; pouring forth the keeneſt invectives on himſelf, the Duke, and the Princeſs, for the delay that was interpoſed to his happineſs.

As for the Marchioneſs herſelf, the night by no means glided away without anxiety and perturbation. If Tourville grieved at the ſeparation, her

her regrets were ſtill more acute. She could ſcarcely help accuſing herſelf of unjuſt ſeverity, by excluding him from her ſociety during the hours when nature repoſes in ſilence; a ſilence made for lovers, when the moſt delightful raptures are felt in watching through the night, in the preſence of the object that inſpires and animates our contemplations. But the fears, the timidities of the firſt night of the union had impreſſed themſelves ſo ſtrongly on her imagination, that it was in vain that the Princeſs occupied herſelf in pleading for Tourville.

The aſpect of profound melancholy which the Marquis wore, ſurpriſed the

the whole company the next morning. Nor was the Marchioneſs leſs gloomy than her huſband. But when they met, all the rebellious complaints, the mutinies of his heart were at once quelled into ſubmiſſion. They even derived a great ſatisfaction from the mutual chagrin, which preyed upon their ſpirits.

The Marchioneſs was ſilent. She only beheld her lover, and her huſband amid the group aſſembled to celebrate the feſtivities of their nuptials. In theſe feſtivities they were compelled to take a part; and Tourville let ſlip no opportunity of addreſſing to the object of his affections the moſt tender

and

and impaſſioned glances. With great ſolicitude did he wait the hour of repoſe. At length the company retired. When ſhe was alone, the Marchioneſs ſeemed affected with the melancholy impreſſed in Tourville's countenance.

" Have I been deceiving myſelf, as " it were, in an enchanted viſion?" ſhe exclaimed. " Or am I beloved " with equal warmth of affection. " No, my dear Tourville, I have no " doubts concerning the purity of your " heart. But alas, you are ſtill unjuſt. " Do we belong to each other; and " can I believe that you are miſerable " whilſt I am happy? It is too true. " I am impelled by love to feel regrets

" correſ-

" correſpondent to yours. Alas! I " confeſs it. My ſentiments are van- " quiſhed. Tourville, you triumph. " I am no longer myſelf."

At theſe words ſhe ſeemed to re-ſtrain the expreſſion of her feelings. The prey of ſo many diſcordant agi-tations, her body and her ſpirits de-manded the reſtoration of a few hours' ſleep. With languor and laſſitude ſhe ſtretched herſelf on a ſofa, and wooed to her gentle eye-lids the ſlumber, which exceſs of anxiety and emotion had rendered ſo neceſſary to her.

Tourville in the mean time, fearful as he was of ſinning againſt the holy ſpotleſs

ſpotleſs purity of his wife, could not reſiſt the deſire of being in her preſence. Their two apartments communicated by means of a terrace which ſurrounded the chateau. Rows of orange trees breathed a delicious perfume; the cloſet of the Marchioneſs was ſurrounded by broad mirrors: and in the reflection, which a light, burning by her ſide, threw upon the glaſs, he was enabled to diſcern the ſpot where ſhe repoſed. Approaching by degrees, and ſcarcely breathing, he at length entered the apartment. Love had rendered him at once bold and fearful.

Her diſordered treſſes fell negligently, as ſhe ſlept, over a neck of the whiteſt alabaſter. Her eyes were cloſed; and her long black eye-laſhes ſerved as a veil, which ſet off by contraſt the whiteneſs of the ſkin on which they repoſed. It was the ſleep of love. Her ſoul was lighted up with his fires. Half ſtifled words eſcaped her lips; they beſpoke conſiderable agitation, as if ſome ſecret conflict was carrying on in her boſom. Several of Tourville's letters, and his picture, were ſcattered by her ſide. The heat of the evening had rendered it neceſſary to leave her window open. By this paſſage Tourville entered, and

penetrated

penetrated to the very ſanctuary of his divinity.

At every ſtep his apprehenſions augmented. At length he ſtood before her; before the unveiled and ſleeping miſtreſs of his affections. The charms that burſt upon his ſenſes overwhelmed him. Involuntarily he knelt to worſhip the beauties that blazed before him. O inconceivable delight, when he heard thoſe lips pronounce in faint and tremulous accents the name of Tourville! He could pauſe no longer. At once he locked her in his arms with the ardor of a lover, burning with the moſt furious paſſion. "Ah!" ſhe exclaimed, as

ſhe opened her eyes, which were full of that expreſſive languor which lovers beſt underſtand, "ah, Tourville! how "I adore you! What a dream! It is "enchantment! But no charm is "ſweeter than your preſence. Tour-"ville!—dear Tourville!"—

"Am I", exclaimed the enraptured Marquis, "am I the ſubject of the vi-"ſion which has juſt been playing on "your imagination! I am the happieſt "then of lovers." She was ſilent. Her ſilence alarmed him. But what was the ſilence? It was that which expreſſes every thing. Her looks left nothing unſaid. "Let me in-"terpret that look into compaſſion," cried

cried the eager Tourville. She bluſhed; and with a moſt enchanting modeſty buried her head in the boſom of her lover.

Let no mortal hand attempt to paint the raptures of this moment. The ſpouſe, the lover, nay the god of her idolatry is now rewarded for his long and painful conſtancy. In vain ſhe heſitates. A delicious, and involuntary weakneſs defeats at once her doubts, her timidities, and her irreſolution. A celeſtial and holy tranſport flows through every vein of their frame, till the ſenſes themſelves appear at once annihilated.

Oh!

Oh! bliſs of true, unadulterated affection! Oh, banquet of enjoyment, prepared by the hands of the gods themſelves!

FINIS.

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